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Mr. High Commissioner,
Australian High Commission,
Australia House,
Strand,
London WC2B 4LA.

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P.V. Barbara,
45 Matilda House,
St. Katharine's Way,
London E1 9LQ.
31st August '90.

Dear High Commissioner,

I understand that Australia is to send naval vessels to assist in imposing an embargo against Iraq. Does it not seem hypocritical for Australia to send warships a third of the way around the world to help impose sanctions against a large aggressor nation that has invaded a small oil-rich neighbor, in view of the Australian government's reaction to Indonesia's invasion and continueing occupation of East Timor, another small, oil-rich neighbour? (Though the oil is not yet being exploited, it is there in abundance).

As you will be aware, Indonesia invaded East Timor on 7th December 1975. The invasion came as no surprise to the Australian government; I will quote just part of one cable, sent on 17th August '75 by Australian Ambassador R.A. Woolcott from Jakarta to Canberra; it shows that four months before the invasion, when informed that the Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, might communicate to Indonesian President Suharto Australia's opposition to the use of force, Woolcott argued strongly against such a move; he also said it would be easier to negotiate with Indonesia than with Portugal or East Timor about the seabed border, where oil exploration might take place: '...It is of course a decision for the Minister and the Prime Minister but I am somewhat concerned about the proposal that the Prime Minister might send a message to the President (Suharto). As I stressed in Canberra last month we are dealing with a settled Indonesian policy to incorporate Timor, as even Malik admitted to me on Friday...I believe the Indonesians are well aware of our attitudes to Timor at all levels. ...We are all aware of the Australian Defence interest in the Portuguese Timor situation but I wonder whether the Department has ascertained the interest of the Minister or the Department of Minerals and Energy in the Timor situation. It would seem to me that this department might well have an interest in closing the present gap in the agreed sea border and this could be much more readily negotiated with Indonesia by closing the present gap than with Portugal or independent Portuguese Timor. I know I am recomending a pragmatic rather than a principled stand but that is what national interest and foreign policy is all about.....'. Plus ça change; Machiavelli, Hitler or Stalin would have agreed wholeheartedly, as would Saddam Hussein, and of course Bob Hawke.

Immediately upon taking office, Hawke and his Foreign Minister Bill Hayden overturned Australian Labour Party policy of support for self-determination for East Timor, proclaiming that 'East Timor must now be put behind us' in order to safeguard bilateral ties with Indonesia. And only last December, 14 years and 200,000 East Timorese deaths (almost a third of the pre-invasion population of 688,000) later, Australia signed an agreement with Indonesia, sharing out the Timor Gap oilfields.

I ask you to cast your mind back further, to World War II. The Japanese were invading southwards at an alarming pace. Australia sent 400 commandos into Timor to delay and harrass

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them when they arrived. The majority of the Timorese were sympathetic to the Australians, and assisted them in their fight against the Japanese. The commandos were extremely successful, and caused the Japanese very severe casualties out of all proportion to their number. After about 15 months, however, things got too hot for the Australians; they withdrew, having lost only 40 men. The Timorese, of course, could not withdraw, and were left to the tender mercies of the Japanese, who understandably were not very appreciative of the help they had given the Australians. Up to 40,000 lost there lives, some at the hands of Australian aircrew, who whilst bombing Japanese positions after the withdrawal inadvertently bombed Timorese civilians. There are Australian veterans who are sickened by Australia's betrayal; they remember how the Timorese selflessly assisted them against the Japanese. Unfortunately, the Australian Government seems to be beyond shame.

Regarding UN initiatives, the issue was voted on every year from '75 to '82 in the General Assembly. In '75, Australia voted against Indonesia; in '76 & '77 it abstained; and in '78, '79, '80, '81 & '82 it voted in Indonesia's favour.

I have a personal message which I ask you to pass on to Prime Minister Hawke: 'What doth it profit a man (or a nation) to gain half the oil in the Timor Gap, and suffer the loss of his (or it's) soul?'

Yours sincerely,
Paul Barbara.

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